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Education and Local Government Interim Committee

59th Montana Legislature

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September 6, 2006

Hand Delivered

Governor Brian Schweitzer
State Capitol, Room 204
PO Box 200801
Helena, MT 59620-0801

In Re: Additional Proposed Budget Decision Packages for the
Montana University System for the 2009 Biennium Budget

Dear Governor Schweitzer:

At the meeting of the Education and Local Government Interim Committee (ELG) on August 18, 2006, the committee voted unanimously to recommend the attached three proposed budget decision packages for the Montana University System for the 2009 biennium budget.

As we did in July, we are forwarding these to you together with our recommendation that you consider these decision packages for inclusion in the executive budget for the 2009 biennium.

Please note that the attached document is the original work of the Joint Subcommittee on Postsecondary Education Policy and Budget (PEPB), which consists of legislators, members of the Board of Regents, as well as your representative, Jan Lombardi.

Once again, what is unique about this recommendation from our committee is that these decision packages include clear and concise accountability measures that effectively clarify the outcome deliverables that state government expects from the university system for the state funding that would be appropriated in House Bill 2 (HB 2). In the initiative for Healthcare Worker Education, for example, state funding would only roll into the present law base of subsequent budgets upon the successful completion of the stated accountability measure deliverables.

As the attachment explains, in order to make these accountability measures operational, both in terms of the content as well as the process, the ELG has made a recommendation to the interim Legislative Finance Committee to discuss and consider the concept of a "HB2 companion bill" in order to make the accountability measures operational as part of the state budget. The Legislative Finance Committee will be meeting on October 12 & 13, 2006.

As you and your staff members know, the accountability measures in these decision packages are taken primarily from the Shared Policy Goals and Accountability Measures document, signed by both the PEPB and the Montana Board of Regents in February 2006. It is the intention of this document to clarify the common outcome objectives of state funding for the university system, and we believe these decision packages are the next logical step in this process.

Once again, we send these to you with the recommendation that you will consider these decision packages and their accountability measures to be included as part of the executive budget for the 2009 biennium. We thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Senator Jeff Mangan, Chairman

Cc: David Ewer, Office of Budget and Program Planning
Jan Lombardi, Policy Advisor for Education
Sheila Stearns, Commissioner of Higher Education

Attachments: Proposed Decision Package Language (August 18, 2006 document)